Progressive Calvinism

© *Progressive Calvinism League, 1956*

VOLUME II MARCH, 1956 NUMBER 3

Contents

	Page
Religion And Culture	66
Moses, Greatest Lawgiver Of All Time	67
Moses, On Adultery	70
Socrates And Plato, On Promiscuity	71
A Few Rational Arguments Against Adultery	76
Socrates And Plato, On Justice	79
The Merits Of The Socratic-Platonic Definition Of Justice	85
The Demerits Of The Socratic-Platonic Definition Of Justice	88
Moses, On Justice	92
Religion And Culture, Again	96

Published monthly by Progressive Calvinism League; founders: Frederick Nymeyer, John Van Mouwerik and Martin B. Nymeyer. Responsibility for articles assumed by author only. Annual subscription rate: students, $1.00; others, $2.00. Bound copy of 1955 issues: students, $1.00; others, $2.00. Send subscriptions to Progressive Calvinism League, 366 East 166th Street, South Holland, Illinois, U. S. A.

Religion And Culture

The word *culture* can mean the general characteristics of people which distinguish them from other people. People in every age have had their peculiar culture. But the word can mean more, namely, not your characteristics which make you what you are, but your *superior* characteristics which put you *above* other people, so that they admit that you are *cultured.* We are using *culture* in this second sense, namely, having that culture which enables you to claim that you have something which sets you apart from and above others; for example, you are educated, or talented, or wise, or something.

There are several ways to manifest the acquisition of culture: (1) you study philosophy; or (2) you accept as unchallengeable the hypotheses of science; or (3) you take to psychiatry and psychology, sociology, social work, or some popular brand of economics; or (4) you specialize in the fine arts — music, painting, sculpture, poetry, dramatic art; or (5) you devote yourself to social life, entertainment and fine manners and keeping up with the Joneses — "society life." Add one or more of these to Christianity (and Calvinism) and then you have "culture" as well as religion.

If you have "come up in the world" and cannot claim some culture (as just outlined) you ordinarily will not be happy. You will develop an inferiority complex. You will be nervous that you will be labelled a *Christian,* without the additional label that you are also a philosopher, or a scientist, or a business tycoon, or a society leader, or an artist.

Before the modern age, the outstanding cultural label aspired for was philosophy. To be a *philosopher* as well as a Christian (or theologian) was the top of the mountain. That is changed today; science has taken the place of philosophy; but among some isolated Calvinist groups aspiring to culture, ancient Greek philosophy still is supreme as that addition to Christianity which gives the possessor of the two (Chrisianity *and* philosophy) that something which is named *culture.*

In such naive groups it is not *modern* philosophy which is the supplement to Christianity by which culture is attained; instead

it is *ancient Greek* philosophy. It is not even the down-to-earth philosophy of Aristotle, but the imaginative philosophy of his predecessors, Socrates and Plato. And so we get a somewhat regular pattern among some groups of Christians about as follows:

1. Simple Christianity; then
2. Christianity plus the philosophy of Plato; later
3. Christianity plus psychiatry, or sociology or science, or *modern* philosophy, etc.

Socrates and Plato were two of the greatest of all the sons of men. They were cast in the mold of intellectual giants. Their ideas make interesting and delightful reading. But we shall contrast them with Moses to show how great a lawgiver Moses was.

fn

Moses, Greatest Lawgiver Of All Time

Moses lived about 1520-1400 B.C. He was born to Hebrew parents who were taskpeople of the Egyptians. He was adopted by a daughter of Pharaoh and brought up in the Egyptian court.

His life is divisible into three periods, each of 40 years. (The Jews used 40 years to designate the span of a generation; the three phases may, therefore, be either exact or approximate time.) The three phases were:

First forty years: Reared in Pharaoh's court in Egypt and treated as an Egyptian prince. Killer of an Egyptian engaged in coercion.

Second forty years: A refugee in the southeast corner of the triangular Sinai peninsula east of Egypt. Here he was a sheep herder, probably thinking hard on all the "problems" of life, and possibly trying to draw up rules of right and wrong.

Third forty years: An advocate and agitator in Egypt for his own people, the Hebrews. The leader of the exodus of the Hebrews out of Egypt. He sur-

> vived as leader for 40 years, until the Israelites had conquered the land east of the Jordan, leaving the main part of Palestine west of the Jordan to be conquered by his successor, Joshua.

Undoubtedly, Moses made the most of his Hebrew and Egyptian opportunities in order to get superior training. He will have been innumerable times in the Egyptian temples of Isis and Osiris; he will have pondered about the God of his ancestor Abraham, the great original thinker in his own day on *monotheism* — that there is only *one* God, a God not to be seen and who is not material. Moses will have asked himself who were right — the Egyptians with their many Gods, or the Hebrews with their *one* God? He undoubtedly came to a clear conviction that his ancestor, Abraham, was right and not the Egyptians.

Probably, too, he must have done considerable traveling as an Egyptian prince, particularly in the Egyptian army. It is possible that he knew the terrain of Palestine and its approaches "like a book." On various trips he may have noted the gross immorality of the Amorite nations in Palestine.

Palestine has had a varied political history. At various times one of three distinct patterns prevailed: (1) Palestine was independent; or (2) she was completely or partially subordinate to a great Mesopotamian power to the north; or (3) she was completely or partially subordinate to Egypt to the south.

In the years prior to the exodus and the conquest of Palestine by the Hebrews, Palestine was under the general domination by Egypt. That is known from secular history. Egypt had governors and agents stationed in Palestine. Occasionally, an army of Egypt traversed Palestine. No great power was permitted by the Egyptians to arise in Palestine. The country was divided into small city states.

Scripture gives the same picture. Joshua reports:

> And I [God] sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. (Joshua 24:12.)

The passage is meaningless unless the reader knows what is meant by "hornet." The hornet was the symbol or crest of the Pharaohs. Probably, therefore, in the text which has been quoted *hornet* refers to the armies of the Pharaohs and their repeated forays into Palestine. Those armies of the Pharaohs (the hornet) by periodically traversing the Palestine area had weakened the various governments in Palestine. That general weakening made the conquest of Palestine by the Hebrews easier — even possible, humanly speaking.

This Palestinian situation would not be unknown to a prince of the Egyptian court as Moses had been. Probably it was a common subject of talk in the court circles in which Moses moved. Such knowledge would later be of great advantage to Moses as leader of an exodus and as the strategist for a campaign of conquest.

Regarding Moses's personal qualities, the evidence is impressive. He was an exceedingly mild and nonviolent man — the *meekest* of his generation; a hard worker, but not an especially good organizer. He was an adventurer from the desert who could handle himself well enough so that Pharaoh apparently never seriously considered having him assassinated — which might have been considered by Pharaoh as an easy solution to the problem Moses was creating. He was a man of great courage, trying the apparently impossible and seldom despairing; the greatest leader of any exodus in all time. Undoubtedly, too, he had a magnificent contemplative mind, a mind not idle for 40 years in the desert, but trying probably to develop a brief statement of the "great" moral laws. What are they? How could they be summarized?

There are two tests of Moses as a lawgiver:

1. Is he a reliable guide on *practical* questions — the Second Table of the Law; and
2. Is he a reliable guide on the *grand, unsearchable problems* of life — is there a God, what is He like, how must He be served — the First Table of the Law?

We are considering only the first of these two.

The Jews, since Moses, have ever recognized the unique character of the Decalogue as inspired by direct revelation. The Ten Commandments were to them timeless and universal — the greatest glory of Israel. What philosophy contributes to the glory of Greece, the Law of Moses contributes to the glory of the descendants of Abraham. fn

Moses, On Adultery

Moses was 40 years old when he killed an Egyptian quarreling with an Israelite, and then fled.

Having killed the Egyptian, Moses buried him in the sand, undoubtedly swore the Israelitish witness to secrecy, and pretended that he himself was innocent. A few days later he discovered to his consternation that the Israelite had been loosemouthed and talked.

Moses fled east and south to a desolate wilderness 600 miles away inhabited by few people. There he attached himself to a local celebrity with *seven daughters,* and without delay made a deal to marry one of the daughters, Zipporah.

Imagine this Hebrew and ex-Egyptian prince, in exile from his people and his native land, and far from the lavish court in which be grew up, now married to a dark-skinned desert woman and begetting children in his middle and old age (his 40th to 80th years); squatting in the simmering desert heat in the shadow of rocks and scrub trees; and pondering about Egypt and its men and women, and himself and his wife. There he sits, squinting his eyes across the blazing desert sands trying to settle in his mind definitely what the rule should be controlling the relationship between men and women.

During the exodus he eventually, under the guidance of God, comes up with one simple rule: *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

He allows no exceptions. He makes the same rule for *everybody.* He does not say: Thou shalt not commit adultery, but some of that is all right if you are a strong man or a handsome

woman. He does not say that kings may commit adultery, or philosophers, or the rich, or old or young. He makes one broad unqualified *prohibition.*

He does not say that adultery is all right in order to breed up the stock of human beings, as it is possible to breed up horses into thoroughbreds. He was indifferent to any eugenics program, that is, the program to improve human beings by a certain kind of breeding.

He does not prohibit, but he does regulate polygyny. He does not bobble on that subject, as the various churches do today who must cope with the problem in Africa and elsewhere. On this subject Moses was an intense realist.

He recorded stringent laws against incest, condemning the marriage of his own father and mother who were an uncle and niece.

He revealed a realistic insight into the problem of widows, and provided for their well-being by promulgating his unusual levirate laws.

We have here, then, a remarkable combination of laws on the relations between the sexes. Nothing more simple, uncompromising and realistic has ever been published by anyone else.

We plan first to contrast these basic sex rules of Moses with the far more complex — shall we say "cultured" proposals — of Socrates and Plato. fn

Socrates And Plato, On Promiscuity

Promiscuity is unrestricted sex relations between the sexes. Promiscuity exists among most animals.

It is probably correct to say that a general tendency towards promiscuity exists among humans. But there is a counter-tendency toward monogyny. A man may wish to be promiscuous himself but he wishes his wife to be monogamous. A woman may wish to be promiscuous herself but she wishes her husband to be monogamous. (This double rule will not, of course, work well.)

There is, too, another considerable difference between people in regard to monogyny and promiscuity. Women demand support in return for sexual access (a perfectly reasonable demand). Men cannot, however, *generally* support more than one wife and her children. Supporting even one wife and her children is a chore (very worth-while) in itself.

It is the stronger and abler men who can think in terms of having more than one woman. It is the more attractive women who have the greatest prospect of a connection with more than one man. There is, therefore, a subtle psychology excusing a prince or a powerful man and a charming and handsome woman in regard to multiple sex relations. Why not? It can be argued that the stronger, abler and more handsome should breed more than the weaker, less competent and the ugly. (This is private eugenics — improvement of the race by selective breeding.)

When a man or woman endeavors to justify multiple sex relations, a self-estimate of superiority is one of the most common arguments used. Nevertheless, in societies influenced by Hebrew ethics this is only a subjective, private justification for multiple sex relations. It is not accepted by public opinion nor brazenly advanced.

The great Greek thinkers, Socrates and Plato, thought differently about this. Their ideas on sex relations are outlined in *The Republic* (in *The Works of Plato,* translated by B. Jowett, The Dial Press, New York), the famous book by Plato on how society ought to be organized. This was their plan:

1. Society should be divided into three major groups:
    a. Workers (who would essentially be slaves)
    b. Guardians (soldiers)
    c. Rulers (philosopher-kings)

2. The second and third groups, the soldiers and the philosopher-kings, would have no marriage. The men in these two top groups would have the women in these groups *in common.* Children born of these groups would be taken away from their mothers and would become unknown to them and to their fathers. This breeding would be done for the benefit of the State.

We have here a program of bold eugenics, and a deliberate promiscuity among the upper classes. These upper classes would in the Socratic-Platonic plan be wholly communistic — eat together, sleep together, have the use of property together.

A few quotations will describe the Socratic-Platonic plan.

> The law . . . is to the following effect, — "that the wives of our guardians [*guardians* here refers to the two upper classes, the philosopher-kings who are the rulers, and the guardians who are the soldiers] are to be common, and their children are to be common, and no parent is to know his own child, nor any child* his parent." (Page 187.)

The wiser and braver that you are the more women you can have.

> That the brave man is to have more wives [sexual intercourse] than others has already been determined: and he is to have first choices in such matters more than others, in order that he may leave as many children as possible. (Page 214.)

The children of the inferior people will be destroyed. (This is generally known as infanticide.)

> The proper officers will take the offspring of the good parents to the pen or fold, and there they will deposit them with certain nurses who dwell in a separate quarter; but the offspring of the inferior, or of the better when they chance to be deformed, will be put away in some mysterious, unknown place, as they should be. (Page 191.)

Socrates and Plato have here provided for the destruction of the offspring of the inferior parents and the deformed children of the upper classes.

The upper classes are expected to breed heavily between the ages of 20 and 40 for women and 25 and 55 for men. The references in the following are to the men and women in the two upper classes only.

> A women . . . at twenty years of age may begin to bear children to the State, and continue to bear them to

*This completely annuls the Fifth Commandment. If you do not know your father and mother, you cannot honor them.

> forty; a man may begin at five-and-twenty, . . . and continue to beget children until he is fifty-five.
>
> * * *
>
> Any one above or below the prescribed ages who [begets or bears children] shall . . . have done an unholy . . . thing.
>
> * * *
>
> This applies, however, only to those who are within the specified age: after that we allow them to range at will . . . And we grant all this, accompanying the permission with strict orders to prevent any embryo which may come into being from seeing the light; and if any force a way to the birth, the parents must understand that the offspring of such a union can not be maintained, and arrange accordingly. (Pages 192, 193.)

The rulers [philosopher-kings] are, according to the foregoing, to have complete charge of breeding in the upper classes. After 40 for the woman and 55 for the man they may be completely promiscuous — they may "range at will." However, no children are to be born to or survive from such promiscuity. The two ways to prevent children from surviving are (1) abortion — "strict orders to prevent any embryo which may come into being from seeing the light"; and (2) infanticide again — such children cannot be retained, and the "parents [must] arrange accordingly."

The sex program of Socrates and Plato consists in the following: eugenics, promiscuity, abortion and infanticide.

What could have motivated Socrates and Plato to outline this beautiful plan as far as the *objective* was concerned, namely, the improvement of the race; and this atrocious plan as far as the *means* were concerned — namely, promiscuity, abortion and infanticide? That becomes an interesting psychological problem.

The answer appears obvious. They personally wanted access to many women. Their scheme involved the rulers being philosopher-kings. They themselves were to be the philosopher-kings. And they themselves would help breed up the stock — the wiser and braver a man was, the more women with whom he could cohabit.

We have here a case of eugenics being the excuse for personal license in sex matters, and personal license is excused on the ground of a self-appraisal of personal superiority.

In fact, Socrates admits that his scheme is a delightful thought, something that a philosopher-king could "day-dream" about, namely, the possession of more women than in a Mohammedan heaven. This is what he says:

> . . . Yet grant me a little favor: let me feast my mind with the dream as day dreamers are in a habit of feasting themselves when they are walking alone; for before they have discovered any means of effecting [accomplishing] their wishes . . . they would rather not tire themselves by thinking about possibilities; but assuming that what they desire is already granted to them, they proceed with their plan, and delight in detailing what they mean to do when their wish has come true . . . (Pages 187, 188.)

"Feasting his mind . . . day dreaming . . . assuming that what they desire is already granted . . . delight in detailing what they mean to do when their wish has come true . . ." In short, we have here a classic case of the sub-conscious being rationalized — all for the alleged sake of eugenics, and the "welfare of the state."

The sexual scheme which Socrates and Plato outlined has always seemed immoral to us. The two upper classes were to have sexual liberties denied to the masses. Here was to be a society with a plain double standard. The underlings were not to be promiscuous; but the overlords were to have that liberty. We have wondered how long the two systems could exist side by side — restraint among the masses; no restraint among the elite. We assume that the masses would imitate the elite. All of the Socratic-Platonic society (we think) would soon be promiscuous.

When we try to place ourselves in the Socratic-Platonic society, *we* never put ourselves in the class of the workers. Nor do *we* put ourselves in the class of the soldiers. *We* positively imagine *ourselves* in the class of the philosopher-kings. That combination entrances us — to be a ruler (one of the kings) *and a philosopher.* In the Socratic-Platonic society *we* would have all the privileges of the philosopher-kings.

We are not exceptions, we are sure, in regard to the class in which we visualize ourselves. Possibly one of the reasons why philosophy is popular in denominational colleges is that the professors and the students in philosophy imagine themselves to be philosophers. And as philosophers in an ideally organized society, they would be kings.

It is then not difficult to explain why there are *Plato Clubs* on college campuses but never *Moses Clubs.* fn

A Few Rational Arguments Against Adultery

Moses, we have explained, was against all promiscuity and adultery. Socrates and Plato, the great Greeks, were in favor of promiscuity for the two ruling classes.

Granting as we do that Moses obtained his law from God which would make it *authoritarian,* are we to conclude that the law was not also logically necessary? Or do *authority* and *reason* coincide in this matter?

We are inclined to believe that Moses considered the rational arguments (1) against adultery and promiscuity and (2) in favor of chastity and monogyny to be conclusive. Then *reason* and *authority* would become identical for him. Here are some of the rational arguments which we believe may have occurred to him.

1. The average man will not support a woman who does not belong to himself *exclusively.* If a woman will carelessly give a man sexual access, he suspects she will do the same to another man. If she does, a child may be born who belongs to another man. *Men will not support other men's children. Men will not regularly support a woman who they believe to be promiscuous;* they will only intermittently support such a woman. (See Hume's *Moral and Political Philosophy,* "Of Chastity and Modesty," page 127, Hafner Publishing Company, New York, 1948.) A man will support a woman through thick and thin if he believes she has been (or at least then is) his exclusive possession. In this regard women

are no better than men. If Mr. *A* begets a child by Mrs. *B,* Mrs. *A* will not (ordinarily) take the child and rear it. She will practically always insist on letting Mrs. *B* rear the child. She will not (except in unusual cases) tolerate Mrs. *B*'s child in the same house or environment with her own children. We remember reading somewhere the comment by a psychiatrist that it appeared to be an unchangeable phenomena that men will *never* really forgive and forget a sex deviation by their wives, and vice versa. To have women in common or men in common may appear like a glorious public park, but practically everybody would rather have a ten foot square garden *of his own.* The smaller which you alone possess is better than the larger owned in common. In short, human psychology cannot tolerate promiscuity and no successful society can be organized on the basis of promiscuity. Neither men nor women are tolerant or nonjealous.

2. Promiscuity is apparently not what it is often imagined to be. The authority on this is Solomon. He had many wives. He must have known the approximate "satisfaction" to be got from relative "promiscuity" (because of his polygamy). If we read Proverbs correctly, Solomon says that *there is no more pleasure to be got from the second woman than from the first.* If that is the fact,* then there is no good reason for mankind to prefer promiscuity to monogyny. It is true, Solomon quotes a woman as saying "stolen waters are sweet" but he adds the immediate comment that she is a "deep ditch," a destroyer, and the road to sure ruin.

In regard to the permanent satisfaction to be derived from a strange woman, we remember some information we acquired early in life. We had employment in a fashionable residential area. Inexperience in the work and the quantity of work which needed to be done kept us in the office far into the late hours of the night. Then we would walk to our sleeping quarters a mile or more away.

Our employer had a friend whom we had learned to know — a famous ex-football player. His name was known from coast to coast. He was a popular idol. Even today it will be recognized by a new generation as a great name in football. One night we

*Proverbs 5: 18-23.

saw this man walking on the other side of the street slightly ahead of us. He, too, was on his way home. We increased our walking speed and began to angle across the street in order to catch up with him. He heard our footsteps. It seemed that he immediately increased his gait, but we gained on him. Then his heavy, powerful figure stopped, silent, waiting. When near to him we said hello and identified ourself. His figure seemed to rise out of the ground from a half-crouching position, and he greeted us with obvious intense relief. He had assumed we were intending to rob him.

We walked on together. He was so unnerved that he was talkative. He had spent the evening with a woman downtown. He began to complain. He was annoyed at the lack of *permanent* satisfaction. He declared that afterward a man had a feeling of "revulsion" toward the woman and he wanted to know whether that unpleasant reaction was universal. We admitted we could not inform him. But his inquiry did result subsequently in our giving a broad meaning to what Solomon wrote. Women who are promiscuous possibly generally cause a feeling of "revulsion" in the man which does not help in promoting their keeping the man. We assume that the only circumstances in which a man does not have a subsequent feeling of revulsion is toward a woman of whom he is the sole possessor. Otherwise, if a marriage must experience the shock of repeated revulsions, it will not have much stability.

3. Marriage is essentially for the *protection* of women and children. Granted that men and women need monogyny for their *psychological* satisfaction, it is the women and children, especially and additionally, who need monogyny for their *physical* protection. A man will neither support currently nor accumulate funds for the use of a strange woman and strange children.

4. Actual adultery or promiscuity are, of course, far more disturbing than suspicion, but the latter is almost ruinous in itself. If a woman merely suspects her husband, she readily justifies a subsequent irregularity on her own part; and vice versa. Solomon makes reference also to women pulling their houses down (Proverbs 14:1); to give even remote grounds for suspicion is to destroy the stability of her secure control over her mate. The smarter the woman, the more discreet.

We come then to a choice between Moses versus Socrates and Plato. There is an unbridgeable gulf between their ideas. We consider the ideas of Socrates and Plato on sex relations to be destructive of society. We consider Moses a superb lawgiver. His rule is very brief: Thou shalt not commit adultery. Great and prosperous and stable societies apparently need that rule.

We believe that the lonely desert thinker on this subject (in so far as it was his thinking) completely out-thought two of the greatest of the Greek philosophers. fn

Socrates And Plato, On Justice

We have already referred to Plato's *The Republic.* This book, which is one of the most famous in all literature and thought, is devoted to the question, *What is justice?* Obviously that is a tremendously important question.

In the February issue of Progressive Calvinism we recorded our general attitude toward *discrimination,* namely, that we believe in completely free and unrestricted discrimination, by anybody *except* that there is one class of discriminations which is prohibited, namely, discriminations involving *injustice.*

We are not, as most people, opposed to discrimination on the basis of religion, race, nationality, sex, wealth, wisdom, beauty, virtue, and any other standard. On all these matters we claim complete freedom. But cutting across all these standards that most people set up (but which *we* do not set up) is an entirely different classification, namely, the standards of *justice* and *injustice.*

Justice and *injustice* are terms which can be related to religious terms, namely, *justice* can be equated with *righteousness* and *injustice* can be equated with *sin.*

In proportion as denominational leaders of Calvinist churches begin to talk against discrimination on the basis of religion, race, nationality, etc., they have subtly shifted base. They are no longer

talking about the simple appraisal of every act as *righteous* or *sinful,* or as *just* or *unjust.* They are no longer working on the basis of a religious and moral *antithesis.* Indeed, it is believed that many who are indisposed to emphasize *the* antithesis, namely, of the evil versus the good as the term is used in the Christian religion, are the same people who have shifted away from justice versus injustice and from righteousness versus sin over to those altogether different bases of classification, namely, religion, race, nationality, class, sex, etc.

We are not "progressive" in the sense that we like the change from the simple antithesis of right versus wrong (or virtue versus sin, or justice versus injustice) over to bases of classification which do not permit simple *moral* judgments.

In a definite sense, then we go back to Scripture which is a Book on justice and virtue, and also to a book as Plato's *The Republic* which covers the same subjects. The great ancient Hebrews and the great ancient Greeks at least could state the *problem* correctly, namely:

> *How discriminate according to justice and injustice, or according to the good and the evil?*

They did not befuddle and complexify and confusilate themselves with a diversity of classifications which instead of helping to solve the problem actually make a solution more difficult. The question is not the validity of a discrimination on the basis of race, for example, but on the basis of *justice.*

When, then, the trend of the thinking of leaders in Calvinist churches is away from the single standard of *sin* (or injustice) to the multiplicity of standards, namely, religion, race, nationality, class, etc., then we consider that trend to be a downward one. If care is not exercised, the members of Calvinist churches will certainly become confusilated.

We have grouped Socrates and Plato together. Socrates (470-399 B. C.), pop-eyed, squat, ugly and poor, was originally a sculptor in ancient Athens who turned to the search for knowledge and wisdom and to teaching. The Delphic oracle said he was the wisest of all men because he knew that he did not know. He is the first in the series of three men, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, who are at the peak of the pyramid of fame as Greek philosophers.

Plato (427-337 B.C.) was a pupil of Socrates. It is not possible for us to separate the ideas of Socrates from Plato. Socrates (as far as we know) left no writings. Plato, in contrast, wrote many books, and in many of them he writes in a dialogue style, in which dialogue the speakers are Socrates and his pupils or others. It is difficult (for us) to distinguish therefore between what Socrates thought and what Plato thought. Plato implies that the ideas are Socrates's ideas. But Plato does not repudiate those ideas. We therefore believe that *The Republic* faithfully reflects the ideas on justice and injustice of both Socrates and Plato. (In what follows we shall use their names interchangeably.)

What Is Justice?

Justice may be considered narrowly. Suppose two men have a dispute and are unable to agree. They then go to a judge. He "judges" between them, presumably according to his best opinion, of what is *justice* in this specific case.

But many men and women never appear during their whole lives in a court as contestants. They might then say that justice is not a broad problem, at least it has not been broad enough ever to touch them.

Plato and Socrates speak of justice in a much broader sense. They consider everything in life to be a question of justice. Your position in life is a question of justice. All of your relations to others are a question of justice. How society is organized and holds together is a question of justice. Who rules and who obeys is a question of justice. Who has much worldly goods and who has little worldly goods is a question of justice. Justice is different from mere legal relationships. Justice is what is *really* due you rather than what is legally due you. Justice is broader than the statutes and laws of the land.

Moses, it will be remembered, succeeded very well in regard to the problem of a *simple* statement of the law. It had to be simple to become universally usable. Socrates and Plato worked on the same problem. They, too, had to have a simple definition of justice in order to make it usable.

Here is the definition of Socrates and Plato on justice; the quotation is from a dialogue of Socrates and Glaucon (*The Republic*, pages 153-155), (our italics):

Socrates: You will remember the original principle which we were always laying down at the foundation of the State, *that one man should practice one thing only, the thing to which his nature was best adapted*: — *now justice is this principle or a part of it.*

Glaucon: Yes, we often said that one man should do one thing only.

Socrates: Further, we affirmed that *justice was doing one's own business, and not being a busybody . . .*

Glaucon: Yes, we said so.

Socrates: *Then to do one's business in a certain way may be assumed to be justice.* Can you tell me whence I derive this inference?

Glaucon: I can not, but I should like to be told.

Socrates: Because I think that justice is the only virtue which remains in the State when the other virtues of temperance and courage and wisdom are abstracted; and, that justice is the ultimate cause and condition of the existence of all of them, and while remaining in them is also their preservative . . .

* * *

Socrates. Let us look at the question from another point of view: Are not the rulers of the State those to whom you would entrust the office of determining suits at law?

Glaucon: Certainly.

Socrates: And are suits decided on any other ground but that *a man may neither take what is another's, nor be deprived of what is his own?*

Glaucon: Yes; that is their principle.

Socrates: Which is a just principle?

Glaucon: Yes.

Socrates: Then on this view also justice will be admitted to be the having and doing what is a man's own, and belongs to him?

Glaucon: Very true.

Socrates: Think, now, and say whether you agree with me or not. Suppose a carpenter to be doing the business of a cobbler, or a cobbler of a carpenter; and suppose them to exchange their implements or their duties, or the same person to be doing the work of both, or whatever be the change; do you think that any great harm would result to the State?

Glaucon: Not much.

Socrates: But when the cobbler or any other man whom nature designed to be a trader, having his heart lifted up by wealth or strength or the number of his followers, or any like advantage, attempts to *force his way* into the class of warriors, or a warrior into that of legislators and guardians, *for which he is unfitted,* and either to take the implements or the duties of the other; or when one man is trader, legislator, and warrior all in one, then I think you will agree with me in saying that this interchange and this meddling of one with another is the ruin of the State.

Glaucon: Most true.

Socrates: Seeing then, I said, that there are three distinct classes, *any meddling of one with another,* or the change of one into another, is the greatest harm to the State, and may be most justly termed *evil-doing?*

Glaucon: Precisely.

Socrates: And the greatest *degree of evil-doing to one's own city would be termed by you injustice?*

Glaucon: Certainly.

Socrates: This then is injustice; and on the other hand *when the trader, the auxiliary, and the guardian each do their own business, that is justice, and will make the city just.*

How simple! Justice is doing what you are fitted to do. Injustice is doing what you are not fitted to do.

Is this too *simple* a definition of justice? We do not think so. The definition has, we believe, as far as it goes, some extraordinary merit.

We shall not, however, *finally* accept this definition. fn

The Merits Of The Socratic-Platonic Definition Of Justice

It would be a grievous error to fail to appreciate the extraordinary merit of the Socratic-Platonic definition of justice, namely, that "justice is doing one's own business."

Socrates in the earlier parts of the dialogue in *The Republic* has developed the fundamental idea that there is a great advantage in a society from *specialization in tasks.* A man working *only* on making shoes will become expert; another working *only* on growing food will become expert. And so Socrates provides for a society in which there is "division of labor."

This clear awareness of the advantages of "division of labor" is one of the great Socratic-Platonic insights. It took another 2,200 years before another thinker appeared on the scene who was able to make the idea still more important. This was Adam Smith who explained the idea of the "division of labor" with such clearness and force that British and western society was transformed by it. Smith made clear that if "division of labor" was good for people *within* a country, the principle holds equally for people *across national boundary lines;* therefore, free trade (as Adam Smith so clearly stated) was a boon, a sound policy, an enricher of life.

Society exists primarily because of the advantages derived from the division of labor. If people were not able to produce more by division of labor than otherwise, then *society* would never get beyond family units. The family would exist for biological

purposes. But the further development of society would be nullified unless there was division of labor. Men would not become experts. Not being experts, they would have no reason to exchange. Not being interested in exchange, they would be indifferent to their fellowmen and to their society.

Some religious leaders have erred grossly in connection with this "division of labor" idea. Abraham Kuyper, Dutch Calvinist theologian and prime minister of the Netherlands, for example, never understood that the *international* division of labor was a fragmentary part of the *general concept* of division of labor, and that *therefore* basically free trade was a sound and moral principle. (See January, 1956, issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.)

Or consider the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, probably one of the greatest charlatans and false prophets in the history of men. He had a program of weaving his own loincloth, growing his own rice, thatching his own hut — in short, not more but less division of labor, doing everything as much as possible himself. This was a return to the "simple life" and self-sufficiency, and less division of labor. There is no better way to insure that 100,000,000 Hindus are to die of starvation than literally to carry out Gandhi's reactionary program. It is only a high division of labor in the world which will support as many people on the face of the earth as exist today.

Socrates and Plato 2,300 years ago had a much sounder idea on the economics of society than Gandhi, or for that matter, than many social reformers and devout Christians or Calvinists of the present age.

Progress in society depends on a *further increase* in the division of labor, a further specialization, a further exchange, a greater interdependence, a greater (be not shocked) fraternity among men, more brotherliness, or in *our* language, more brotherly love in exactly that *cooperation* which exists because of the division of labor. We believe in being *progressive,* that is, that there be more and more division of labor; we do not wish to retrogress to a former state of less division of labor or to be static and have the present degree of division of labor. When we hear preachers from their pulpits extol the simple life, we dissent. When they complain about the monotony of work resulting from becoming experts and

high producers and therefore exchangers of goods, we regret that they have never read Plato's *The Republic,* or far better, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations.* When they advocate less division of labor, they in effect wish to substitute 16 hours of *variety of work* for six days a week and 52 weeks a year (4,992 hours) in place of eight hours of *specialized work* for five days a week and 50 weeks (2,000 hours). We consider that to be a poor trade.

There are two kinds of skills recognized in the Socratic division-of-labor principle: (1) natural differences in talents, and (2) acquired differences in skills.

Socrates and Plato acknowledge both kinds of differences. That is the same as saying that they were deliberate, unqualified *discriminators.* In the February issue we wrote about not being able to sing (no sense of tone or of rhythm), but nevertheless demanding admittance to a choral society — (falsely) in the name of justice. That is exactly the principle underlying the program promoted almost universally throughout the world *today.* There is no real emphasis on *fitness* as a basis for deciding (discriminating) what a man should have or do. The emphasis is that you should not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, nationality, etc. (even though you may believe that those factors affect *fitness,* at least *your* idea of fitness). You get then a whole set of collateral standards for *justice.* Socrates, however, kept it simple; just *one* standard, namely, fitness. (This is the same basis on which modern *laissez-faire* economics is based.)

There is a curious note missing in Socrates's program for justice. That missing note is the note that there should be equality. Socrates does not say that justice consists of *equality. Fitness* as a standard is the opposite of *equality.* It is in fact the injection of the idea of *equality* into the picture which nullifies the fitness principle. I may wish to be a member of a choral society, even though I am unfit because I cannot carry a tune, but if they exclude me I may raise a cry of *injustice* because I do not have "equality" with those who can sing.

But Socrates and Plato were operating on just the opposite principle from equality. They wished to organize society on *differences* and not on *likenesses.* This is a profound insight on their part.

What is the root principle that Socrates and Plato were using? This: people are created different; *differences* determine what they should do; their *differences* constitute their *advantages and not their disadvantages.* On the basis of their differences they can *in every case, without a single exception, always and forever* be proved to be ahead if there is a free division of labor. This is equally true for the less talented as well as for the highly talented. There are no exceptions to this principle. Justice and not equality then does the best for them, and also the best for society.

In short, Socrates and Plato have here a great magnificent definition of justice.

They did not, however, realize fully how sound and advantageous their principle was. It took an Adam Smith and a David Ricardo and a modern Mises to make that infinitely clearer and cogent. fn

The Demerits Of The Socratic-Platonic Definition Of Justice

From what has been written in the previous article it might be concluded by readers that the society based on the Socratic-Platonic idea of justice is indeed the ideal society, as Socrates and Plato declared positively that it was. That conclusion is erroneous.

The Calvinists in the Netherlands several decades ago put out a Christian encyclopedia, which they called *Christelijke Encyclopaedie,* (J. H. Kok, Kampen, Netherlands). Such an encyclopedia could not, of course, ignore the great Greek philosophers, and we have read the articles on Socrates and Plato in this encyclopedia.

The article on Plato was written by Prof. Dr. T. Hoekstra. In that article Dr. Hoekstra has this summary paragraph (our translation):

> This State of Plato is a coercive* *state,* in which there was no place for freedom of the individual.

**dwangstaat.*

A *coercive* state? And justice is supposed to exist in a *coercive* state? There is something wrong here.

Progressive Calvinism has devoted considerable space in various 1955 issues (May, July and November) outlining the obvious idea that *coercion is sin.* Our reasoning was simple. The Sixth Commandment in The Decalogue reads: Thou shalt not kill. This is the simplest possible formulation of the general idea of *not coercing.* For us then, the commandment could almost as well read: Thou shalt not coerce. This same idea is formulated in positive form, in the New Testament, when we read in the Sermon on the Mount: Blessed are the meek [who do not coerce], for they [believe it or not!] shall inherit the earth. We recoil then from the Socratic-Platonic definition of justice, if it involves, as Dr. Hoekstra declares, *coercion.*

In fact, *everyone* who reads Plato's *The Republic* will realize that Socrates and Plato have outlined a *coercive* state. None of us, if he himself has carefully read *The Republic,* needs Dr. Hoekstra to point that out. We come then to this series of ideas: (1) coercion is sin (and injustice), (2) Socrates and Plato outlined a so-called ideal society based on coercion; (3) therefore, the ideal (?) society which they outlined is an evil society (and unjust). But it was exactly a *just* society which they set out to define. What is wrong?

The answer is that it is not the *goal* that is wrong but the *means* to attain the goal. The goal is that everybody should find his proper place in a society because there is division of labor (or functions); *but the real question is HOW?* In the preceding article we only explained the *objective,* the *goal,* the *end* result aimed at.

The answer of Socrates and Plato is that there are to be *philosopher-kings,* who are to determine and regulate *everything* in this society, that is, they are to determine what each person is to do and *for what he is fitted; that* he must do. This regulation (today we would call it interventionism) pertains to the work that each person is to do, the marriage or mating of each individual, the education of each individual, etc. — in short, it pertains to everything.

The philosopher-kings in the Socratic society are supposed to be above all base self-interest. This is supposed to be avoided by having property in common and women in common — that is, communism in the possession of women and of goods. These philosopher-kings do everything for the "welfare of the State," that mystical body which supposedly is knitted together by the bonds of love for all.

The Socratic-Platonic means to attain the goal has two characteristics irreconcilable with the Biblical position (or any realistic position). These two characteristics are:

1. The *use of coercion* by the philosopher-kings; and
2. The *assumption of the existence of intellectual capacity to determine (plan, control, intervene in) everything* in society; this is a hubris, a piece of boundless and inexcusable intellectual arrogance, as if men were gods to be able to regulate everything.

In regard to the use of coercion in the Socratic society it should be noted that coercion is extended to compel the doing of what is considered to be good in a positive sense. It is obviously quite another matter to consider coercion to be proper in order to prevent certain acknowledged evils from being perpetrated on a neighbor. It is one thing to have a law forbidding (coercing) me from defrauding my neighbor by gross misrepresentation; it is quite another thing to have a law *commanding* (coercing) me to do some "positive good" (whatever that may be!) for my neighbor.

Who can decide on a positive good which might be done for a neighbor? There are three separate answers:

1. *I* can decide myself what I want to do for my neighbor or what I do not want to do.
2. The *neighbor* can decide what I must do for him, whether I wish to or not.
3. *Third parties* (separately or collectively, like the State; usually collectively, of course) can decide for both of us — me and my neighbor.

If the second prevails, it is theft or violence. If the third prevails, it is the same thing but is believed by nearly everybody to be different because it is *called* welfare. But both two and three are *coercion*. They involve compulsion. They are sinful. They are unjust. The only position which has any moral value whatever is the first.

Beyond the coercion there is a worse sin, towit, *pride*. Men who arrogate to themselves to decide what is good for others (beyond the restraint of evil as defined in the Decalogue) are playing at being GOD. *They* know better. They know better than every man for himself. The judgment of a few philosopher-kings is better than the aggregate individual judgments of all men. The mastery of individual detail which only all men individually can master will be taken care of by the broad rules of the philosopher-kings or by their direct meddling into every matter.

This conscienceless intellectual arrogance, this hubris, of the philosopher-kings is a violation of the First Table of the Law. Men are to supersede the Supreme Being as the governor of the affairs of men. What God did not undertake to regulate, some finite philosopher-kings will undertake to do.

Calvinists will reject this whole scheme of Socrates and Plato:

1. They will abhor the coercion that is involved.
2. They will deny that any philosopher-king can be omniscient enough to regulate everything; and finally,
3. They will be realistic enough to discredit any claim of philosopher-kings of being so good, so nondepraved, as invariably to work for the welfare of all.

The grand plan of Socrates and Plato turns out to be a damnable coercion, an inexcusable intellectual arrogance, and an unrealistic denial of total depravity.

In fact, Karl Marx and Lenin and Stalin have merely put into effect exactly what Socrates and Plato recommended. Plato's "republic" is merely Stalin's "people's democracy" with 2,300 years between them. In principle they are both the same thing, a coercive state, a *dwangstaat* as Dr. Hoekstra calls it.

It may well be asked whether in denominational colleges Plato's *The Republic* is equated with Stalin's communism as in honesty it should be. fn

Moses, On Justice

We have previously in this issue contrasted Moses and Socrates-Plato on the question of sex morality. On that question we unqualifiedly follow Moses, as being a more realistic and benign lawgiver.

But can we also follow Moses on the *general principle* for the organization of society, that is, in regard to his ideas of *justice* or *righteousness,* as distinguished from the ideas of Socrates and Plato? We shall answer that question briefly and emphatically.

We believe that there is no significant difference between the ideas of Moses and the ideas of Socrates and Plato in regard to the goal of society — namely, *justice* (or as Moses would say, *righteousness*). Both, we believe, would accept the definition given by Socrates — the idea that justice is that everybody should find his proper place and get his proper due. Moses may not have been so explicit about stating the goal as Socrates and Plato, but the methods Moses prescribed are exactly suited to that end, and so the idea of justice *as a result* is clearly the same for both the Hebrew and the two Greeks.

But then they part company. The difference between them on the *means* to accomplish the objective is an unbridgeable, irreconcilable difference.

Socrates and Plato propose *coercion.* Moses proposes complete freedom, noncoercion, "meekness."

We are here face to face with the wholly unique character of the Mosaic law. It is not a law "to do good"; it is instead a law "to restrain evil." Socrates proposed a state which would accomplish the good; Moses proposed a state which would restrain the bad.

In order to restrain the bad Moses said: honor father and mother; avoid coercion; do not commit adultery; do not lie; do not steal; do not covet. But aside from that *you may pursue your legitimate self-regarding interests.** You do not need to live for the state; nor for your neighbor; live for yourself BUT do not pursue your liberty at the expense of your neighbor (by coercion, immorality, lies, theft and covetousness against him).**

The contrast between Moses and Plato should be clearly understood. Begin with that which is not arguable, namely, everybody should find the best place in society in which he can satisfactorily perform; on this basis everybody attains his maximum potential and everybody obtains for himself maximum justice.

But how decide what each man can best perform? (1) Are *you* to decide that yourself at the expense of others? If so, you are authorized to become a coercer. (2) Is a *government bureaucrat* (a philosopher-king) to decide for you? Then he becomes a coercer. (3) Is your *neighbor* to decide for you? Then he becomes a coercer. Moses authorized none of these. Plato authorized the second.

Moses arranged for this system: the only acts that should be performed are when you and your neighbors can come to a voluntary agreement, that is, that you have a *contract society**** and not a *coercive society,* a *voluntary society* and not a *tyranny,* a *meek* society and not a *violent* society.

Justice cannot be expected to be the result of coercion (1) by *A* for himself against his neighbors; nor (2) by a neighbor against *A*, nor (3) by neighbors collectively (government) against *A*. If coercion is inconsistent with justice, how can noncoercive justice be implemented? The following explains the way Moses's noncoercive justice would work.

Following Socrates, we say that *A* should have his proper work (whatever that is), say, cobbling shoes. Suppose *A*, however,

*For important phases of this problem, see the March, 1955, and later issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.

**This looks at life only from the viewpoint of neighbors, not in the relation of man to God. That is a larger and broader problem.

***See use of this term in Mises's *Human Action* (Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1949), Chapter VIII.

tries carpentry for which he is unsuited. Nobody will buy *A*'s unsatisfactory houses. He is obliged to change because his neighbors are not well served by his houses. *A* does not have his proper work and quits it. But *A* was not coerced in a real sense of the word. It is his choice to have gone into carpentry and to go out of it.

Say that *A* next turns to cobbling shoes, and assume that he does that well — so that his neighbors can profit from buying his shoes. *A* is now genuinely performing a *service;* otherwise they would not buy his shoes. His production is a brotherly deed; it does his neighbors some good.

There may, however, appear to be a possibility that justice (*A*'s opportunity to do his own work) may miscarry. Suppose *A* is a foreigner or has a certain religion or belongs to a certain race and therefore *B* and *C* and *D* are prejudiced and will not buy *A*'s shoes. But the shoes *are really good. B and C and D then hurt themselves when they refuse to buy A's excellent shoes.* Injustice by a man never lasts long when it is at his own expense. In a very short time *B* or *C* or *D* will change his mind and buy. But the "injustice" toward *A* will also be frustrated by "competition." If *B* and *C* and *D* are so hostile to *A* that they are willing to hurt themselves, then *E* and *F* and *G* will begin to buy *A*'s shoes. In fact, the more "unjust" *B* and *C* and *D* have been, the lower the price of the shoes and the greater the opportunity of *E* and *F* and *G* to profit from the malignancy and folly of the others. Eventually, the price of shoes will be the full market price. Justice will prevail.

Moses's great noncoercive law has therefore *three* great devices to protect justice: (1) *A*'s free choice of his own work; (2) the self-interest of the neighbor; and (3) the freedom (competition) of all buyers (neighbors).

Society then finds its maximum potential on the basis of meekness, noncoercion, agreement, fraternity, or, if you will, *brotherly love.*

Any other kind of brotherly love must be based on coercion by somebody. How indeed can that be brotherly love?

And so Moses is the strangest lawgiver of all time. All other lawgivers legislated to restrict liberty. Moses alone, solitarily and grandly, legislated liberty.

All other lawgivers set some men up as rulers over other men in a positive sense. The rulers could tell those who were ruled what to do as well as what not to do. One man (or men) was authorized to lord it over other men. Some mystical public benefit was supposed to come from the coercion by the alleged wise and the alleged good men over other men — as if there were any who were really wise and really good.

Calvinists say that they believe in total depravity. Nobody, they say, is really good, or really trustworthy; we all fall into sin and unrighteousness (injustice would be the word Socrates would use). But this is purely a fictional principle for Calvinists unless they make the practical application that Moses did, namely, all that you can trust to the men in government is to restrain evil. You cannot trust a government to do what is good in a positive sense — a welfare state.

As a legislator Moses is the most unique in all human history. Nobody else set out to do so little — namely, restrain evil. Nobody actually accomplished so much, namely, *unleashed all the latent abilities of all men* fired by legitimate self-interest but without exploitation of the neighbor.

You can think of Moses as a refugee Egyptian prince, or you can think of him as a desert herdsman loafing away his time while taking care of sheep and goats, or you can think of him as a powerful, sagacious thinker in the Sinai desert, or you can think of him as a mere passive phonograph record for God at Mt. Sinai when he came down with the two stone tablets of the law, or you can think of him as a combination of any of the foregoing four — but of one thing anybody and everybody can be certain, viz., those two stone tablets represented the greatest legislation in all the history of mankind — a marvelous *revelation.*

Compared with that legislation, the legislation of the greatest of the Greeks is a gross error and an evil product.

We are reminded of what the English essayist wrote about Francois Villon, the blackguard French poet who "founded" French literature. Villon was a sorry specimen of mankind, living (as much as possible) off the earnings by prostitution of his girl friend. And he was a wassailler and a thief and the rest. Of course, such a rogue would spend much time in prison, and occasionally at the end of each term would come blinking into the bright sunlight. But Villon was not much for light and beauty and goodness. He ignored all that and spent his time in all kinds of vileness; Stevenson uses the figurative expression of "munching crusts and picking vermin." We assume Stevenson was referring to monkeys in the zoo, munching their crusts and picking vermin off each other and eating.

That is the way we look at the grand effort of Socrates and Plato. To follow them in regard to justice instead of following Moses is like "munching crusts and picking vermin" and like ignoring the great expanse of the firmament, and sunlight, and liberty, and the free winds that blow.

Three thousand two hundred years after the great legislator Moses, modern social thinkers in England and elsewhere came up with a modern version of the identical idea. This modern version took the name of *laissez-faire.*

The curious thing is that many conservative and liberal Calvinists are opposed to *laissez-faire,* a term which consists of two French words that mean the same as that Moses legislated, viz., *freedom except no freedom to do wrong.* In PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we follow Moses and we accept *laissez-faire* because it is consistent with Moses.

Shall we believe Scripture? Or is it an unreliable Book? Is the wonderful soundness of the Mosaic Law proof of anything? In our thinking it is; it is proof that the law of Moses is the Law of God. Any contrary law, whether of Socrates, or Lycurgus, or Solon, or Draco, or Calvinists who believe in interventionism or in any law to do positive good — is for us a law not from God but from an evil source.

* * *

What then is justice? Justice is that every man does that for which he is best fitted; further, that that for which he is best fitted is to be determined freely without coercion, according to his own inclination and not according to the command of men in government or the claims of neighbors; and finally, that the rewards for doing that for which each man is best fitted be likewise determined freely without coercion. In short, justice can exist only in a free-market society, in a *laissez-faire* society, in a Mosaic society, in a Law-of-God society.

And when a society becomes that, it becomes prosperous — as Scripture promises. And when a society deviates from that, it becomes nonprosperous — as Scripture threatens.

The teaching of Scripture and the findings of sound economics agree. fn

Religion And Culture, Again

When it is implied that men lack *culture* unless they tack Platonic moral philosophy onto Biblical moral philosophy, then we conclude that we shall never possess *culture* because we are convinced that the two are irreconcilable.

Apparently, however, in some Calvinist circles a synthesis of Biblical and Platonic moral philosophy has been "accomplished." We consider that to be retrogression and not progress. The extent of the synthesis pretended to be accomplished is worth research and inquiry. fn

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM LEAGUE
366 East 166th Street
South Holland, Illinois, U.S.A.

BULK RATE
U. S. Postage
PAID
SOUTH HOLLAND, I
Permit No. 12

POSTMASTER:
If change of address on file, notify us on Form 3547 (for which postage is guaranteed).
If not deliverable, check reason in spaces below. Return postage guaranteed.
☐ Returned at sender's request
☐ No such Post Office in state named
☐ Moved—left no address
☐ Refused
☐ Unclaimed or unknown